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Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 EB-08 COME-00 AID-05 FDRE-00 IO-13
AGRE-00 OES-09 HEW-04 /125 W
----------071843 181455Z /44
R 181325Z JUL 78
FM AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2544
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LUBUMBASHI 0851

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ECON, PINS, SHUM, CG
SUBJECT: VISIT TO KOLWEZI: THE MOOD TWO MONTHS AFTER

REF: (A) LUBUMBASHI 840 (B) LUBUMBASHI 842

1. SUMMARY: IN ADDITION TO OBSERVATIONS ON KOLWEZI MILI-
TARY SITUATION AND GECAMINES PRODUCTION (REFTELS) DURING
VISIT TO KOLWEZI, JULY 11-13, VICE CONSUL TALKED WITH RESI-
DENTS ABOUT GENERAL ECONOMIC SITUATION, EFFECTIVENESS OF
RELIEF PROGRAMS, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL AMBIANCE OF KOLWEZI TWO
MONTHS AFTER THE MAY 13 ATTACK. END SUMMARY

2. KOLWEZI REMAINS A STRICKEN TOWN. ANY PREVIOUS VISITOR
NOTES THE DIFFERENCE AS HE PASSES THE "WELCOME" SIGN ON
THE ROAD FROM LUBUMBASHI. A FEW MINUTES IN TOWN AND ONE
REMARKS ON THE ABSENCE OF AUTOMOBILES, THE ABSENCE OF
DOGS, THE ABSENCE OF EUROPEANS, AND REMARKABLY FEW ZAIRIANS
CHILDREN. A TRIP TO THE RESIDENTIAL AREAS, AND ONE OBSERVES
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THE DAMAGE WREAKED BY MORTARS, BOMBS, AND AUTOMATIC
WEAPONS. BUT PERHAPS THE MOST DISTURBING PHENOMENON
IS THE EXPRESSIONS ON THE TOWNSPEOPLES'S FACES -- THE
LOOK OF HUNGER AND DESPAIR ON SOME, OF UNSPOKEN MALE-
DICTION AT THE SIGHT OF A STRANGER ON OTHERS, AND ON
MANY THAT OF AN IMPLACABLE DISTANCE. IN MANY WAYS A
TRIP TO KOLWEZI IS A SURREAL EXPERIENCE.

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3. DESPITE RELIEF EFFORTS OF THE BELGIAN COOPERATION MISSION AND THE RED CROSS, THE FOOD SITUATION IS CRITICAL. MUCH OF WHAT HAS BEEN DISTRIBUTED TO THE LOCAL POPULATION HAS EVENTUALLY TURNED UP IN THE HANDS OF THE ZAIRIAN ARMY). BELGIAN RELIEF TEAM-MEMBERS FRELLY ADMIT THAT THEIR DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM, WHICH WORKS LARGELY THROUGH LOCAL CHURCHES, HAS ANYWHERE FROM A 30 TO 50 PERCENT LOSS RATE. INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS TEAM MEMBERS IN KOLWEZI WERE DEFENSIVE ABOUT THEIR PROBLEMS, ESPECIALLY THE POSSIBILITY OF CONFISCATION BY FAZ. RED CROSS HAS BEEN DISTRIBUTING MEDICINES AND SOME FOODSTUFFS THROUGH FAZ. BELGIAN TEAM MEMBERS AND PRIESTS SAY RED CROSS EFFORTS HAS SUFFERED GREATLY FROM ITS COLLABORATION WITH FAZ (I.E. RE-QUESTING FAZ INTERVENTION WHEN PROBLEMS DEVELOP), AND ESTIMATED THAT RED CROSS' LOSSES WERE EVEN HIGHER THAN THEIRS.

4. ACCORDING TO THE ZAIRIAN COLONEL WHO HAS BEEN PUT IN CHARGE OF KOLWEZI'S CIVILIAN ADMINISTRATION, THE RE-LIEF PROGRAMS ARE TOLERATED BUT NOT ESPECIALLY WELCOMED BY THE GOZ. COLONEL WOULD RATHER SEE A RETURN TO NORMAL COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES AS THE RELIEF PROGRAMS FOSTER A "DISASTER MENTALITY" AND THE EXPECTATION OF FURTHER GRATUITIES.
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5. BESIDES THE RELIEF DISTRIBUTION PROGRAMS, GECA-MINES CORN FLOUR DISTRIBUTION CENTER (MINOKAT) IS FUNCTIONING NORMALLY. MINOKAT IS ALSO SUPPLYING FLOUR TO FAZ. BREWERY RECOMMENCED OPERATIONS END OF JUNE. SEVERAL STORES HAVE REOPENED BUT LITTLE MERCHANDISE IS IN EVIDENCE. PUBLIC MARKET HAS REOPENED WHERE SOME RELIEF SUPPLIES ARE ON HAND FOR RESALE AS WELL AS FOOD SHIPPED IN BY LOCAL ZAIRIAN BUSINESSMEN. PRICES ARE AT SPECULATION LEVELS, HOWEVER, AND FOOD-STUFFS FOR A SINGLE MEAL PURCHASED AT THE MARKET COST OVER TWO ZAIRES, MANY TIMES THE INCOME LEVEL OF THE AVERAGE EMPLOYED KOLWEZI RESIDENT. WHILE FAZ OFFICERS DID NOT CITE HUNGER AS A PROBLEM, THE FEW RESIDENT EX-PATRIATES BELIEVE THAT RELIEF PROGRAMS WILL END WELL BEFORE KOLWEZI IS ADEQUATELY RESUPPLIED COMMERCIALLY AND STARVATION IS A REAL FUTURE POSSIBILITY.

6. PRESENTLY THERE ARE FOUR EXPATRIATES ASSIGNED TO BREWERY AT KOLWEZI, AUGMENTED BY OCCASIONAL VISITS FROM LUBUMBASHI. EXPATRIATES SAY THAT THEY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 LUBUMBASHI 0851

ENCOUNTERED HOSTILE REACTIONS FROM ZAIRIAN OFFICE EMPLOYEES
AND SOME TOWNSPEOPLE ON THEIR RETURN. ACCORDING
TO THESE EXPATRIATES, THE DOMINANT LOCAL ATTITUDE
IS THAT WHITES ABANDONED KOLWEZI, THAT THEY DESERVE TO
LOSE THE BELONGINGS LEFT BEHIND AND THAT KOLWEZI
CAN SURVIVE WITHOUT THEM. FRUSTRATIONS BECAUSE OF
PROBLEMS REGARDING "NORMALCY" WITHOUT THE WHITES HAVE
MERELY REINFORED THIS ATTITUDE, AND GECAMINES RENEWED
PRODUCTION IS VIEWED AS THE PROTOTYPE OF NORMALI-

ZATION WITHOUT EXPATRIATES. BREWERY EXPATRIATES BELIEVE
THAT GECAMINES WILL COLLAPSE NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF
LACK OF EXPERTISE BUT BECAUSE OF INTRIGUES OF ZAIRIAN
CADRE AGAINST ONE ANOTHER. PRIOR EXPATRIATE LEADER
SHIP THEY POINTED OUT, HAD PROVIED AN APOLITICAL DIRECTION
WHICH HAD KEPT PERSONAL AMBITIONS AND RIVALRIES UNDER
CONTROL.

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7. BELGIAN COOPERANTS AND PRIESTS ECHOED THE SAME
SENTIMENTS. BELGIAN PRIESTS WHO IS DIRECTOR OF LYCEE
JEAN XXIII CHARACTERIZED HIS JOB IN KOLWEZI AS THAT
OF AN OBSERVER. EVENTUALLY THE SITUATION WOULD BECOME
MORE PACIFIED AND EUROPEANS WOULD BEGIN TO
RETURN. BELGIANS THROUGHT DISPLACEMENT OF FAZ FROM KOLWEZI
OR AT LEAST BETTER CONTROL OF ITS ACTIVITIES
WAS THE CRUCIAL FACTOR.

8. MOROCCAN COMMANDER A SEEMINGLY
ASTUTE AND INFORMED OBSERVER OF LOCAL SCENE, BELIEVES
THAT PRESENT ANTI-WHITE ATTITUDES IN KOLWEZI ARE THE
RESULT OF YEARS OF NEGLIGENCE AND DISRESPECT OF THE
ZAIRIANS BY THE BELGIANS. TO A BELGIAN EX-COLONIALIST
HIS ZAIRIAN ASSISTANT IS NOTHING BUT A "BOY" ACCORDING
TO THE MOROCCAN. THE KOLWEZI ATTACK AND MASSACRES
SHOWED THE VULNERABILITY OF THE WHITES AND THE GECAMINES
RE-START SHOWED THAT THEY WERE NOT ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL,
AT LEAST IN THE SHORT RUN. MOROCCAN BELIEVES THAT
ONLY "NEW" EXPATRIATES THOSE WHO HAVE HAD NO PREVIOUS
EXPERIENCE IN ZAIRE WILL BE WELCOME AND WILL BE ABLE
TO WORK EFFECTIVELY IN KOLWEZI.

9. COMMENT: SUPERFICIALLY KOLWEZI IS CALM. BENEATH
THE SURFACE, TENSIONS ARE SIMMERING. THE PRESENCE OF
THE PAN AFRICAN FORCE THE RELIEF PROGRAM THE GECAMINES
RE-START UNDER ZAIRIAN LEADERSHIP ARE ALL
IMPORTANT FACTORS IN KEEPING THE LID ON. EVENTUALLY AFTER
THE GECAMINES QUESTION OF KOLWEZI EXPATRIATE PERSONNEL
IS SETTLED AND THE FAZ INDISCIPLINE IS FINALLY
SUPRESSED, KOLWEZI MAY RETURN TO "NORMALCY" BUT THE
PROCESS WILL BE SLOW. UNDOUBTEDLY THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF
THE LOCAL POPULARION HAS BEEN STRONGLY AFFECTED BY THE
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ONE WEEK OF FLNC OCCUPATION, FOREIGN INTERVENTION AND
THE EXPATRIATE EVACUATION. THE QUESTION IS WHETHER
THIS CONSCIOUSNESS WILL BE SUBMERGED TO PERHAPS EMERGE
AGAIN IN POLITICAL AND SOCIAL VIOLENCE OR WHETHER A
NEW INTERRELATIONSHIP AMONG THE LOCAL ZAIRIAN POPULATION
THE EXPATRIATE COMMUNITY AND THE ZIARIAN GOVERNMENT
WILL EVOLVE
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